

# Delineator

~March, 1937: p. 12~

## A-GROWIN'

SCREEN IDOLS, EPOCHAL FILMS OF THE PAST, NOW AVAILABLE IN MODERN FILM LIBRARY'S SERIES

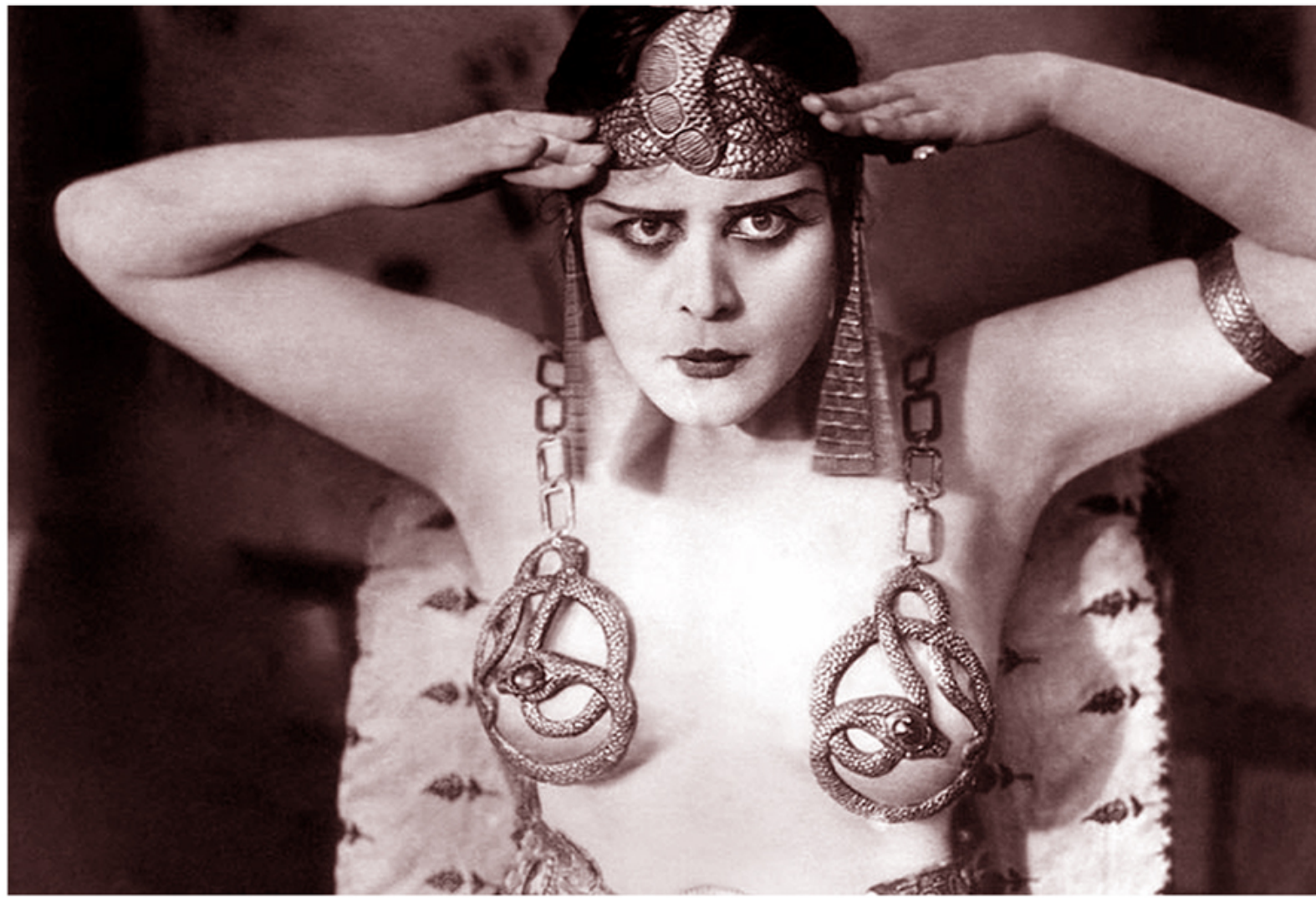
by ELIOT RAMSEY

**T**HERE is a library in New York City where the shelves are stacked with round metal cans filled with films—all the famous films from their beginning in 1895, to 1932. In the projection room of this library the unforgettable grace of Rudolph Valentino, the immortal Sarah Bernhardt, saucy Mickey Mouse, Pearl White, the Gish girls, all the old, old favorites of the flickering screen live again.

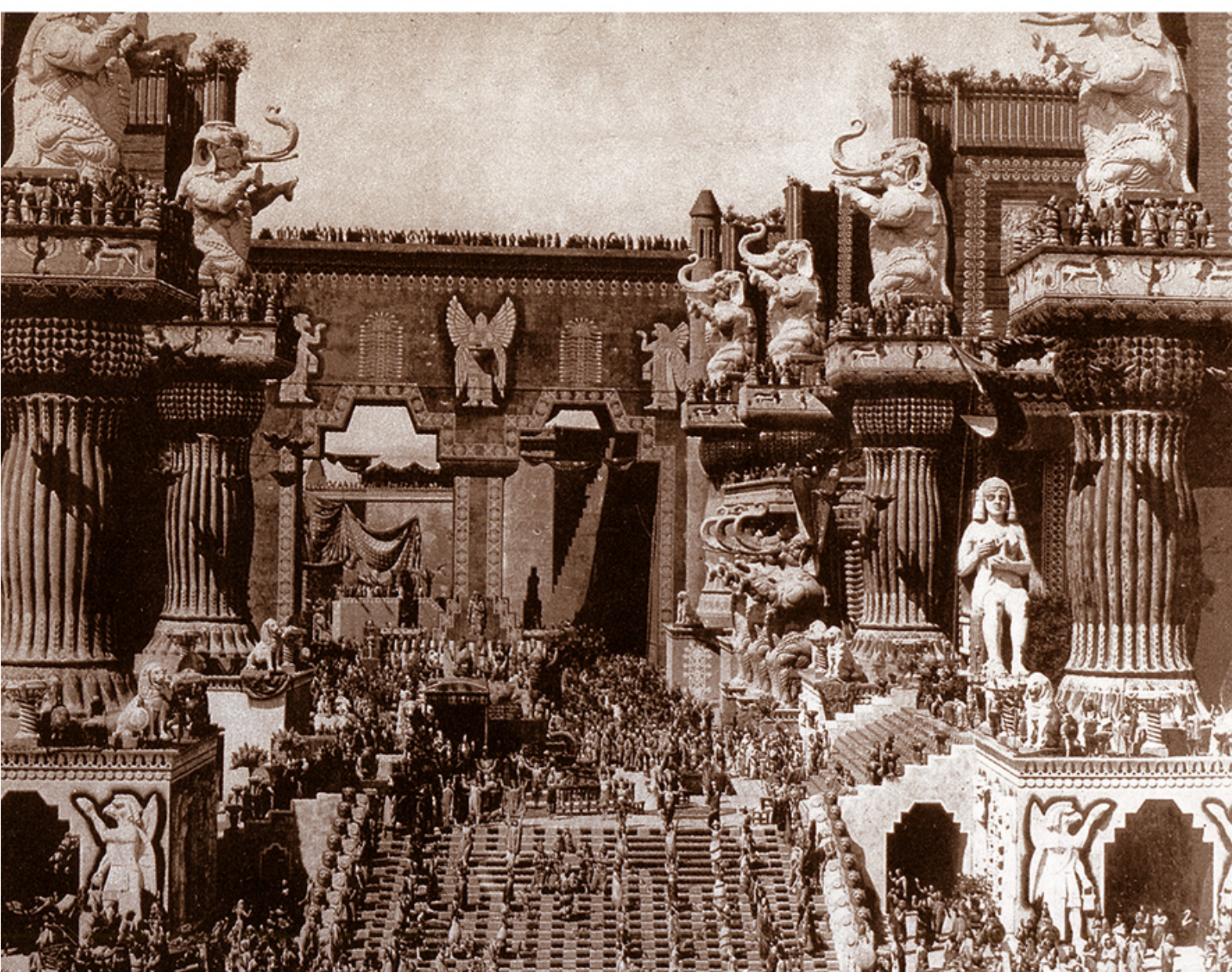
Here in one evening you can see the cinema grow from blundering one-reel episodes that panicked the peep-show goers of 1900 to the million-dollar productions that have become an art in themselves, distinct from the legitimate theater.

The plan of preserving films as historical data was hatched by officers of New York's Museum of Modern Art, under the wing of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. In 1935 the Rockefeller Foundation granted funds that made possible the founding of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library.

How were the film funds found and obtained? Obviously the prime necessity was to gain the interest and cooperation of the film industry, a task about as difficult as gaining the interest of, say, the Cabinet. With the courage of pioneers, the curator, Miss Iris Barry (former London movie critic and founder of the London Film Society) and Mr. John E. Abbott, director of the Film Library, packed up and advanced on Hollywood. It would hardly have seemed strange if this huge and bustling business could not find time for its forgotten films. The film industry is essentially interested in the films of tomorrow—above all in those actually in production at the moment. But Mary Pickford came to



*Theda Bara played the vampire in "A Fool There Was" in 1915 and won instant fame as the first and most lurid of screen vamps. Above: as a devastating Cleopatra in 1917*



*For "Intolerance" (above) Griffith built, in 1916, the first million-dollar set, a tremendous venture and one that relegated makeshift movie sets forever to the past*





*Greatest of modern stars, Greta Garbo in a scene from "The Atonement of Gösta Berling," the role that brought her to fame in the United States. It was released in 1924*

the rescue. To a huge party she invited all the pioneer film people she could find, and they seemed strangely young to be "old-timers" at anything. Walt Disney was there, talking with old Colonel Selig who made Hollywood's first film. Mrs. Thomas Ince was there, widow of the Thomas Ince who directed Mary Pickford long ago. Harold Lloyd, Mack Sennett, Sam Goldwyn, Jesse Lasky, and countless others were there. After dinner old films, half forgotten even by those who had played in them, were shown.

Memories came to life, the faces of friends long dead smiled again. The audience laughed and cried, and victory was complete. To them it seemed novel but pleasant to learn that the work of their lives, and they had worked long and humbly, should be elevated to the rank of an art and put in a museum. Heart and soul the film industry was won over as they cooperated to make the film library a reality.

Since then, many are the old-timers who have come to the library of the New York office: Lillian Gish who mentioned that Noel Coward made his screen debut with her in "Hearts of the World"; that great director, D. W. Griffith,

with anecdotes and recollections; Bill Hart to talk of his famous pony. Pinto Ben; Eva Casanova, widow of Lou Tellegen, to see her husband and Sarah Bernhardt in "Queen Elizabeth." She had never seen it.



~a  
director's  
megaphone

Films turned up in the oddest ways. A stranger offered a famous Continental "Hamlet" with the great Danish actress, Asta Nielsen, in it. She had unearthed it in her hat closet. A young man contributed his collection of 3000 rare stills. It is thus a library of motion pictures has been made, a library that traces the actual birth and development of an art which preserves the social history of the past forty years.

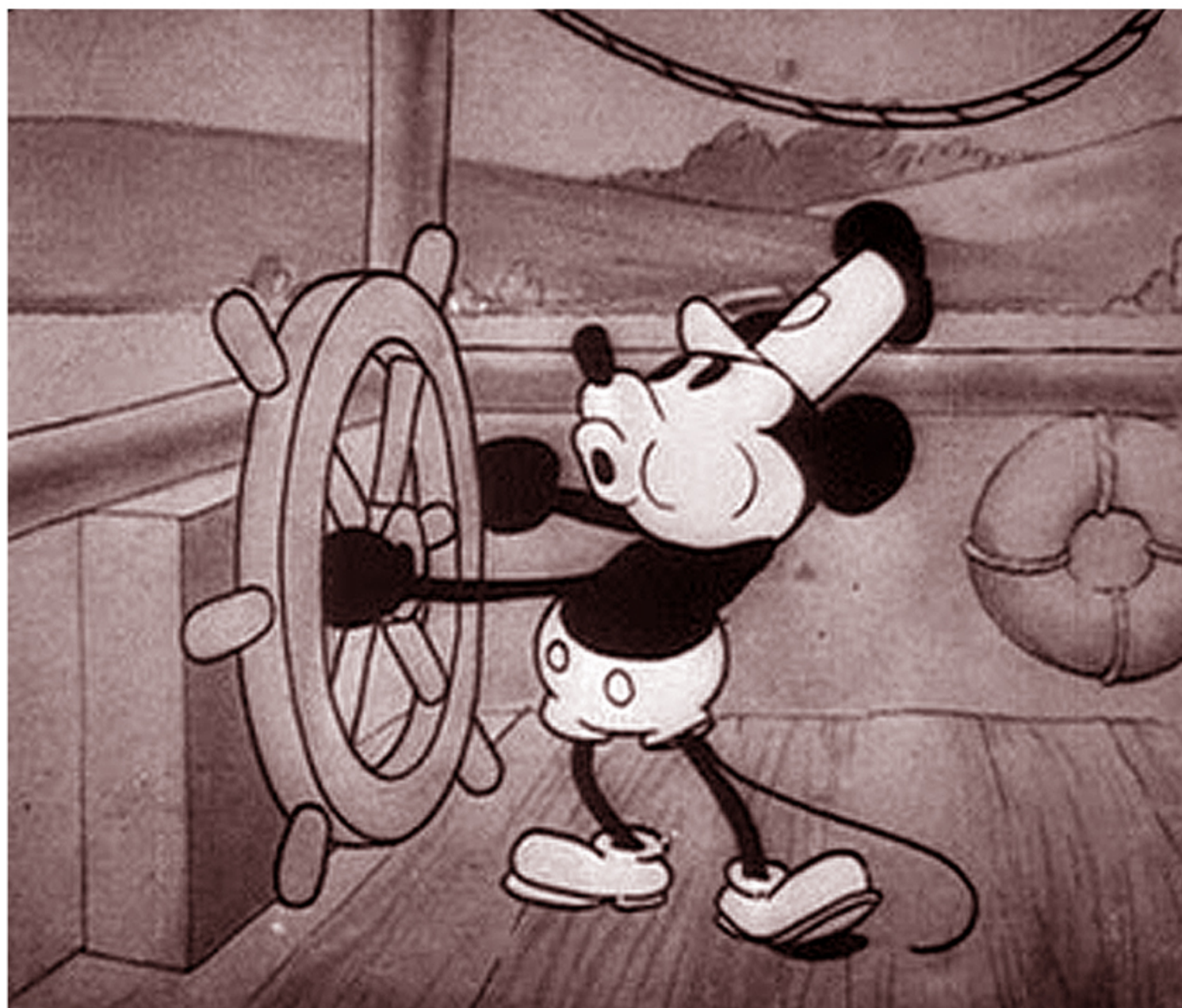
Happily, these collected films are now available to any educational group in the country. They are sent arranged in series of five two-hour programs of films that take you through the history of cinema in America. A series of foreign films is also available. A series rents for \$125, much less than they cost to prepare. Printed music to accompany the silent films, display stills, and program notes, critical and historical are included. There is only one proviso: no admission may be charged.



*Al Jolson and May McAvoy in the first talking picture, "The Jazz Singer," released in 1927 by Warner Brothers—another great milestone in filmland*



## MoMA



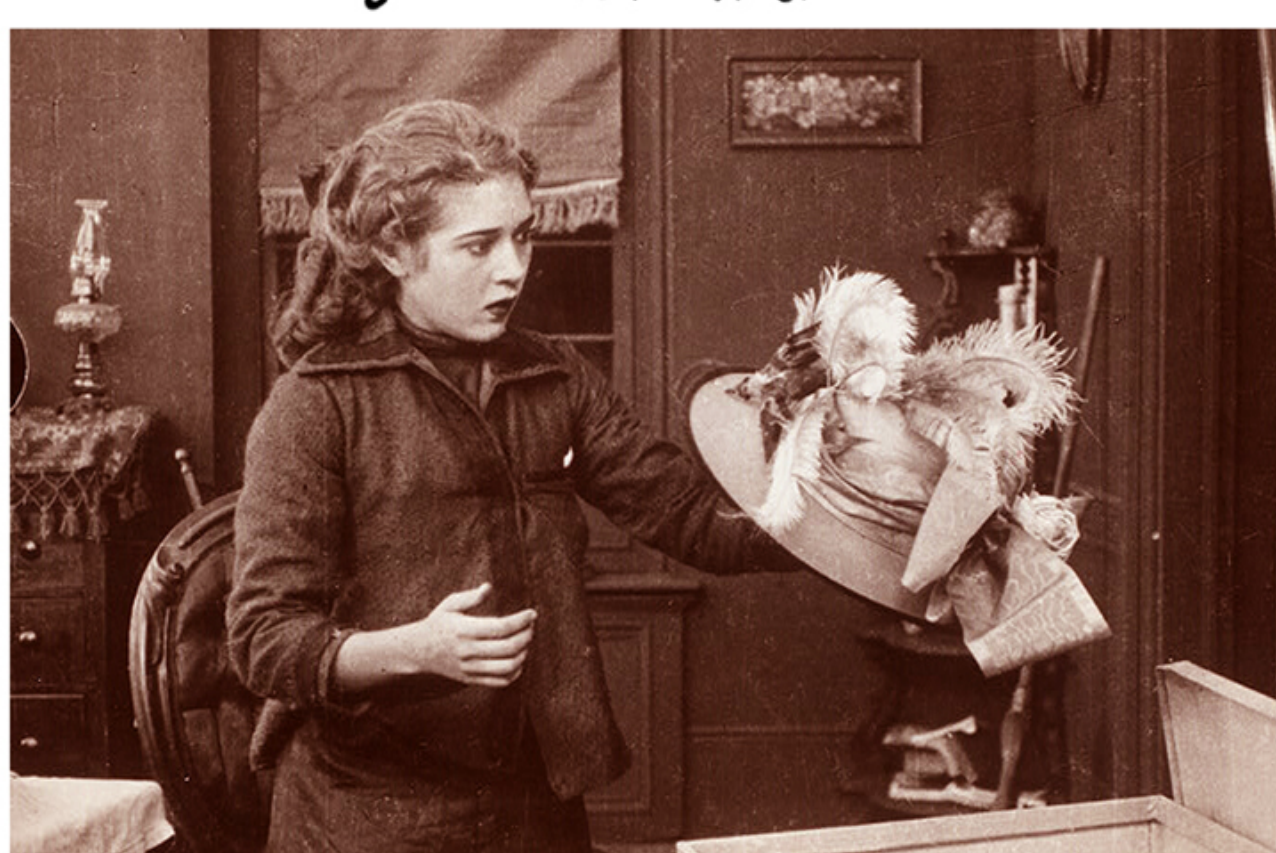
*Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse, who is the world's most popular film star, looked like this when he was born ten years ago. Here he is as brave "Steamboat Willie"*



*The greatest screen lover of all time, Rudolph Valentino, as dashing Monsieur Beaucaire, filmed in 1927. "The Four Horsemen" began his fame*



*The first complete story in film form, "The Great Train Robbery", 800 feet, New Jersey's Wild West*



*"Little Mary" Pickford, in one of her earliest films, "The New York Hat," 1912. Scenario by Anita Loos; Lionel Barrymore's debut*



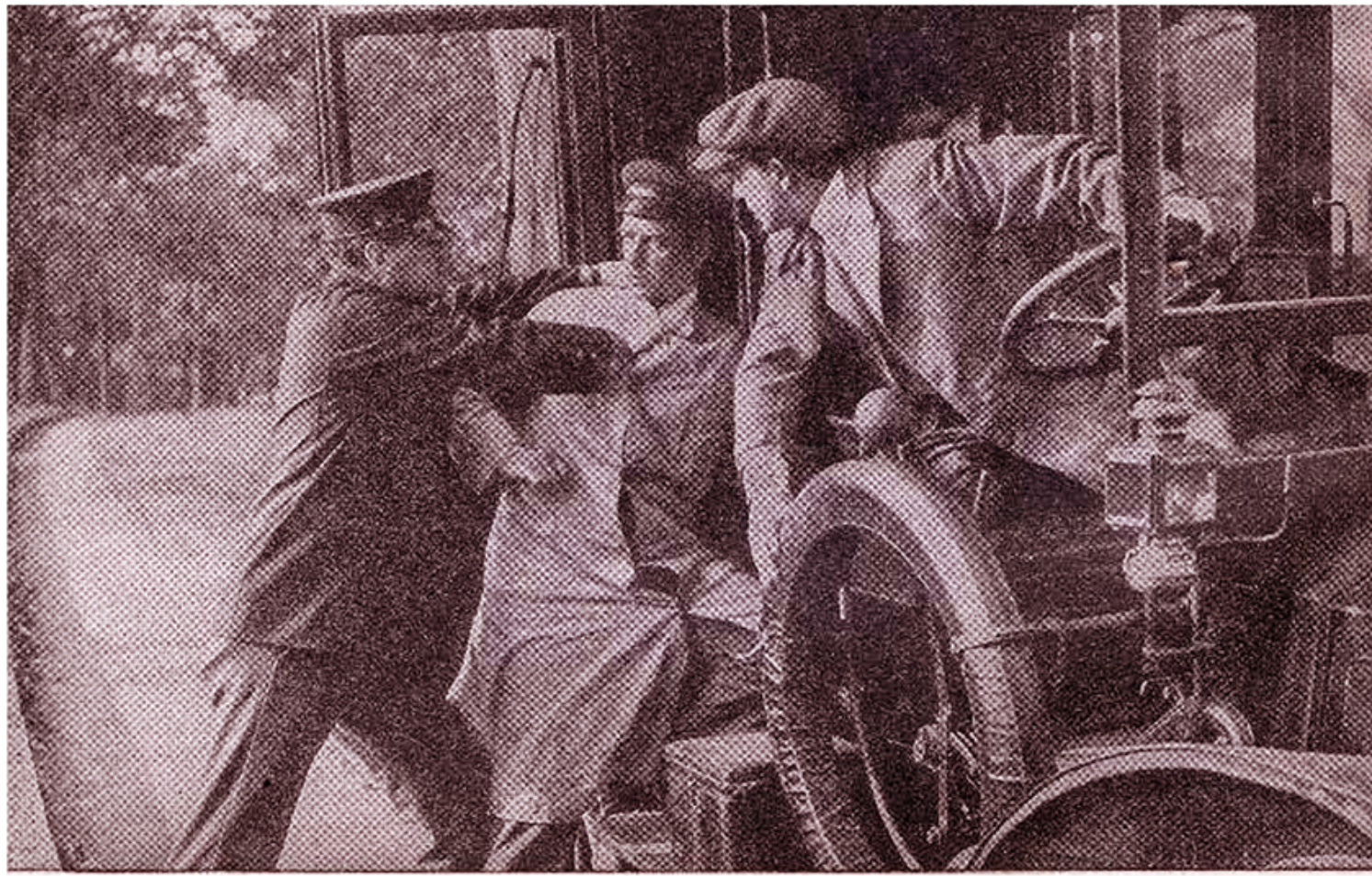
## MoMA



*Charlie Chaplin in "Between Showers," an early Keystone comedy, with Ford Sterling. Chester Conklin plays the perennial Mack Sennett cop*



*The most famous film ever made, Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" (1915), ran nine years, grossed \$15,000,000, ranked cinema with the stage*



*Serial thrillers like "The Million Dollar Mystery" (above) wowed 1914 theater-goers*



*Shockingly daring was this scene, the first close-up of a kiss, with May Irwin and John C. Rice in "Kiss," 1896*



*Bill Hart, first and most famous of Western heroes, rose to fame in 1914 and retired rich*